

Hamlet's soliloquy

Worksheet A

A But what is there after death? This is a difficult question and maybe there are more problems afterwards! So we prefer to tolerate the problems we have now.

B Who wants to fight against so many problems? We could find peace by killing ourselves.

C This is one great way of avoiding these problems – then we can sleep

D Is it better to tolerate problems and difficulties, or to fight them?

E But there is another problem: if we die, we sleep, and if we sleep, we might dream. But what kind of dreams would we have?

Worksheet B

1. The dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all

2. For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

3. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

4. To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

5. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause:

Worksheet C

Hamlet talks about various things that make life difficult. For example, he mentions 'the oppressor's wrong'. Can you give a modern example of this?

Can you match these to the following examples with Hamlet's descriptions?

- A - Your arrogant friend never treats you with respect
- B - You feel old
- C - The flowers you send to someone you like are returned
- D - Your legal case takes years to be decided
- E - You are always nice to someone who treats you badly
- F - Your boss is rude to you all the time

1. **The whips and scorns of time**
2. **The proud man's contumely**
3. **The pangs of despised love**
4. **The law's delay**
5. **The insolence of office**
6. **The spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes**

Have you experienced any of these problems? Can you add some more examples?

Worksheet D

- Can you remember a time when you had to do something but couldn't? What stopped you?
- Why does Hamlet hesitate so much? Why can't he act?

Worksheet E

We are going to write some advice for Hamlet. Look at the questions below. What would you say to him?

- Is it better to **'to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?'**
- Is it better to **'quietus make
With a bare bodkin?'** than to **'bear the whips and scorns of time?'**
- Is it right to feel **'The dread of something after death?'**
- Do you think Hamlet gets over this crisis? What does he do next?

Worksheet F

Here is a summary of how the story ends. Can you complete it with the names of the characters?

- **Hamlet**
- **Claudius**, (who murdered Hamlet's father)
- **Gertrude**, (Hamlet's mother and Claudius' new wife)
- **Laertes**, (The brother of the girl Hamlet was going to marry, who drowned. He is also the son of a man killed by Hamlet)

An example: 1. Hamlet kills several other people...

1. _____ kills several other people but not _____, the man who killed his father.
2. In turn, _____ tries to kill him several times but he is not successful
3. _____ tries to kill _____ one last time by arranging a sword duel between him and _____.
4. There is a trap for _____ : the tip of _____' sword is poisoned.
5. _____ also poisons the victory cup in case _____ wins.
6. The poisoned drink is offered to _____ but he turns it down, and instead _____ drinks it.
7. _____, losing to _____, scratches him with the poisoned sword to ensure his death.
8. _____ then changes swords with _____, and cuts and poisons him.
9. _____'s mother dies, screaming that she has been poisoned.
10. As _____ gets weaker, he stabs _____, who dies, and so finally has his revenge. As he dies, his last words are 'The rest is silence'.

Hamlet's soliloquy

This is a special kind of text, called a soliloquy. It is used when a character talks to himself – or thinks aloud.

To be or not to be--that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to--'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep--
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.